

Natural Religion

Unbound to Dogmas and Rituals

Evolution of Superman

Although civilized, man through better organization, work and technology, is able to reduce anxiety and make life more comfortable, he is not able to eliminate anxiety from his life entirely. Civilized man, in the process of becoming socialized and disciplined, learns to suppress his natural self-centered urges and impulses.

These suppressed impulses begin to accumulate tension, which seeks release in actions. Because this tension is not allowed to be released in actions that are anti-social, they tend to find release in perverted form, or this tension remains in the form of anxiety.

This is why civilized-society is plagued with neurosis, anxiety, problematic stress, terrorism, wars, crimes, and other psychological problems and psychosomatic disease. Civilized man, though he is comfortable physically, is still uncomfortable within. Therefore he seeks inner peace and tranquility. He turns to techniques of stress management, the use of tranquillizer drugs, progressive relaxation, hypnosis, biofeedback and other methods of finding inner peace. He also turns to modern psychotherapy as well as ancient religious techniques of meditation and mysticism.

The important thing about this new turn that civilized man has taken is the focus on inner peace and tranquility. This new turn of civilized man is in the direction of the next stage in the evolution of man. It is the evolution of civilized man to the level of superman. The more natural and more systematic method of evolution of civilized man to superman, however, is achieved through the practice of religion.

By religion, I do not mean mere belief and ritualistic practice. That is what organized religion usually is. I am speaking of natural religion, which is the gradual evolution of consciousness; beginning with the appreciation of what is good and true. This appreciation elevates the human mind above the mere concern with the satisfaction of basic physical needs. In order to understand the evolution of civilized man to the level of superman it is useful to examine the evolution of religion.

The different religions that we find in the world today are different forms of organized religion. Organized religion does not help individuals to fully evolve because the individuals remain bound to dogmas and rituals, and are not free to evolve. Natural religion is a process of individual evolution. There are four main levels of individual religious evolution. They are:

1. The “*Saddhā*” level (devotion)
2. The “*Sīla*” level (discipline)
3. The “*Samādhi*” level (tranquility)
4. The “*Paññā*” level (understanding)

At the “*Saddhā*” level we appreciate what is good and true. This may be expressed in the form of worship of a perfect being who is perfect in goodness and wisdom, whatever be the name one may call Him. Religion is practiced at this level in the form of devotion. It is the devotional level of practice. At this level, man becomes orientated to seek inner perfection. He begins the journey towards civilization.

Religion at the “*Sīla*” level is where one begins to practice the good life, or good principles of behavior, which are socially beneficial. It is at this level that one begins to practice commandments or precepts. This is the level of self-discipline where one begins to control natural emotional impulses and thereby learn to control selfishness. At this level, therefore, we learn to cultivate an interest in others or all beings. It is at this level that civilized man is born. This “*Sīla*” level of religious practice produces civilized man.

The third, the “*Samādhi*” level is the level of renunciation and meditation. At this level one gives up all worldly pursuit, sensual pleasures and possessions and takes to meditation. This may also be called the mystic level. Most mystical states described in various religions, fall under this category of practice. In Buddhism this level is called the “*Samādhi*” level. All the “*Jhāna*” and “*Samādhi*” are practiced at this level. At this level one begins to experience inner peace and happiness which is superior to the excitement of sensual pleasures. At this level, one also begins to experience psychic powers by which one’s mind has control over matter. Moreover, the senses become more acute, and the brain more efficient at this stage. This is the stage at which man becomes – superman.

The last or the fourth stage of the evolution of religion is what is called the “*Paññā*” level. It is at this level that man becomes fully aware of the problem of existence and its solution. At this level there is direct awareness of experience, instead of existence. It is at this level that man becomes superhuman and even loses his identity. This is a stage higher than the level of superman. It is at this level that man awakens from the dream of existence, and ends the process of evolution, by stopping the struggle for existence. It is the final evolutionary stage, where man becomes immortal, not through eternal life, but through freedom from the delusion of existence. It is the stage of the – Awakened One the Buddha, the God become.

These four evolutionary levels of religion are levels that every individual has to pass through during the course of human evolution. This evolution is not an unconscious biological evolution but a consciously executed evolution of consciousness itself.

Religion seen in this way is concerned with individuals, rather than organizations, temples or churches. When an individual evolves from one stage to another the views and lifestyles change. Organized religions tend to prevent such change and therefore obstruct the evolutionary process. Religion that I refer to, and which I call natural religion, is not mere obedience to rules but a conscious process of growth and evolution. It could also be called a growth technique, by means of which an individual consciously evolves from a lower to a higher level of consciousness.

What is special about the superhuman evolutionary stage is the superhuman understanding. This is getting in touch with the ground of being. This ground of being is experience, which can be normal or supernormal. The normal experience is anguish and its cause. The supernormal experience is the absence of anguish and the way to its absence. This superhuman understanding has been described by the Buddha in the form of the Four Supernormal Truths.

1. The understanding of anguish
2. The understanding of the origin of anguish
3. The understanding of the cessation of anguish
4. The understanding of the way to the cessation of anguish

This fourfold understanding is seen by the Buddha, to be superior to the psychic powers and the states of peace experienced by superman. This is because this understanding results in the solution of the problem of existence, and the ending, of the evolutionary process. It is therefore the ultimate point in the evolution of man.

This understanding, however, is not the grasping of a concept but a freedom from all concepts, though it is not an absence of concepts either. It is the direct awareness of experience through introspection. It is seeing experience with its constituent parts and seeing how the parts of experience arise and cease from moment to moment, in the words of the Buddha.

The evolution of superman from man is not so much a biological process as it is a psychological one. It is the evolution of the human consciousness through introspection. The consciousness becomes gradually conscious of itself, and thereby loses the delusion of existence. It is experiencing experience instead of existence. This freedom from delusion paves the way to vistas of super-knowledge that equips man to become superman.

Today the growing science called quantum physics is gradually making mankind aware of the potentialities of the human mind. Mankind must solve its problems through evolution. Just as a child solves his problems by growing up, and animals solve their problems by evolving, human beings too have to solve their problems through maturity, growth and evolution. Modern society is plagued with problems like crime, drug abuse, poverty, mental sickness, psychosomatic disease, insanity, suicide, terrorism, war and many more. All these problems seem to be the result of emotional immaturity. Therefore, maturity, growth or evolution seems to be the only solution. If evolution is the solution to our problems, then it is worth our while to learn how to evolve.

What is Truth?

When it becomes necessary to communicate with ordinary people, the Awakened One returns to the existential paradigm for that purpose, and goes back again to the experiential paradigm. These two modes can be changed from time to time, and are seen as two kinds of *Nibbāna*:

- (1) *Saupadisesa Nibbāna* – experienced when the *Arahat* is in the existential mode
- (2) *Anupadisesa Nibbāna* – experienced when the *Arahat* is in the experiential mode

Being in these two modes breaks up the idea of truth into existential truth (*sammuti sacca*) and experiential truth (*paramatta sacca*), this means there is no such thing as an absolute truth. To hold one idea as truth is to become narrow minded, and to ignore the validity of its opposite. This fact is expressed by the Buddha in the analogy of the elephant and the blind men. The Buddha points out this fact also in the *Cula-viyuha Sutta*, in the *Sutta Nipātha*, in verse form as follows:

If truth is one, and no second exists
Debates will never arise among folk
A variety of truths they themselves do form
Gurus therefore never speak of one truth

*Ekam hi saccam na dutiyamatthi
Yasmim pajā no vivade pajānam,
Nāna te saccāni sayam thunanti
Tasmā na ekam samanā vadanti*

Never was there a variety of truths
Other than sensations always in the world
Creating views using speculative logic
They speak of a duality: falsehood and truth

*Na heva saccāni bahuni nānā
Annatra sannāya niccāni loke,
Takkanca ditthisu kapappayitvā
Saccam musāti dvayadhammāhu*

In the *Alagaddupama Sutta* the Buddha points out that the Four-fold Supernormal Reality (*cattāri ariya saccāni*) is only a solution to a problem, and not a truth to be believed. It is compared to a boat used to cross over the river. It is not to be carried away after crossing the river, but left behind for others to use. Therefore, the Four-fold Supernormal Reality (*cattāri ariya saccāni*) is not a dogma to be believed on blind faith, but only a solution to a problem, which can be used by anyone to solve one's problem. The Buddha takes a pragmatic point of view regarding truth.

About The Four-fold Supernormal Reality, the Buddha states:

- 1) The first truth is not to be believed, but to be comprehended (*parinneyyam*).
- 2) The second truth is not to be believed, but to be eliminated (*pahattābbam*).
- 3) The third truth is not to be believed, but to be realized (*saccikatābbam*).
- 4) The fourth truth is not to be believed, but to be cultivated (*bhavitābbam*).